

Revised February 2006

TO: New Foreign Service Appointees  
FROM: Transportation Operations (A/LM/OPS/TTM/TO)\*\*  
Room 1248 - Main State  
TEL: **1-800-424-2947**  
**202-647-4140**  
FAX: **202-647-4956**

SUBJECT: **YOUR INITIAL TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION**

Welcome to the Foreign Service! You are about to embark on the first of many moves in your Foreign Service career. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with basic information you will need before you actually report for duty. We hope this will help ease your transition.

**TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON**

You and your authorized family members will be permitted to travel by air to Washington, using tickets based on special "city-pair" (contract) fares available only to US Government employees. Once you have your Travel Authorization from Human Resources, contact Carlson Wagonlit in Roslyn, Virginia at **1-866 654 5593** to make your reservations by phone. If you prefer to drive a personal vehicle to Washington talk with Human Resources to obtain authorization to claim *per diem* (based on driving 300 miles a day) and 40.5 cents per mile. You can be reimbursed up to the cost of your authorized airfare. In all but a few cases, you will be allowed to ship a vehicle to your post of assignment. Shipment can be authorized from either your point of hire or from Washington.

**TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS**

To inquire about the status of your Travel Authorization (TA), please call the central number at the Assignment Support Division (HR/CDA/ASD)-Room 4250 – SA-3 which is **202 663 0405**. You will then be transferred to the Personnel Technician who is responsible for your TA. The Office is open for inquiries daily from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM Eastern Standard Time.

Travel Authorizations will usually not be prepared more than 30 days in advance of the scheduled arrival time in Washington, D.C. Sometimes, new employees are asked to report to Washington with minimal time to prepare. If you are obliged to buy and pay for your ticket before you have received your Travel Authorization, be sure to keep the receipt. When circumstances warrant, the Department may reimburse the traveller for the full commercial rate even when the USG contract fare would have cost less.

**PACKING AND SHIPPING PERSONAL EFFECTS**

To make arrangements for packing and forwarding your personal effects and for questions about travel and transportation entitlements, you are welcome to call one of the two numbers listed above. When you call Transportation, a counselor will be assigned. Be sure to note the name of the counselor and to direct all follow-up conversations to that same person. This will save considerable confusion, repetition, duplication and frustration.

Most new employees are temporarily assigned to Washington for orientation and training, pending assignment to their first posting. If you are entering the Foreign Service from a Washington DC area residence (within a 50-mile radius of the Washington Monument), you will not face packing until you

prepare to depart for your first overseas assignment. For those hired from locations outside the Washington metropolitan area, packing is imminent. You will be authorized to ship a limited amount of unaccompanied air baggage (UAB), also referred to as airfreight, to Washington, and to pack and store up to 18,000 lbs. of your personal effects.

Once notified of your acceptance into the Foreign Service, call Transportation to arrange packing dates. You do not have to have a Travel Authorization (TA) to make these preliminary arrangements. However, **DO NOT pack unless you have a Travel Authorization (TA)—also called Travel Orders (TO).** If packers appear at your home to pack and you do not have the document, call Transportation before any work begins. You will not be permitted to pack at government expense if Human Resources has not notified Transportation that orders are prepared.

The Transportation office will make arrangements for your packout including assigning the packing company. The local packers will want to visit you for a prepack survey prior to your packing date to estimate the amount and weight of effects and to determine what supplies they will need for packing. Three days before the move, you should call your local police to reserve space for a moving van to park conveniently.

Sometimes, people want to pack items themselves. However, packing yourself can be tricky. A packing company may/may agree to inspect the contents of a carton which you have packed but not sealed. They will then seal it themselves and accept responsibility. However, NO/NO carton may be described on the inventory as “PBO”—Packed by Owner. Primarily because of heightened security concerns, inventories which contain “PBO” items will be delayed at exit or entry points to the continental US (CONUS). Furthermore, the USG will only accept claims for loss or breakage in cases where the goods were packed by the moving company—never by the individual.

**UNACCOMPANIED BAGGAGE/AIRFREIGHT:** The UAB allowance is determined by family size: single employees receive 250 lbs. gross. For families, the first traveler is authorized 250 lbs. gross, the second 200 lbs., the next 150 lbs. and any additional family member 100 lbs. each. All are gross weights. The gross weight includes airfreight cartons that weigh around 15 pounds each.

Airfreight may include those items considered essential such as clothing, linens, kitchen necessities, dishes and flatware, books, important papers or a portable radio. (Refer to p. 13 of "It's Your Move" for a list of suitable items.) You may include electronic equipment but be sure to pack it well—preferably in the original cartons—because air freight is often handled roughly. The Department is now accepting claims for electronic goods damaged in air freight. However, you should also have your own insurance. It is also important to note that, with no exceptions, all items for UAB must be packed by the movers. They must now certify that they packed all airfreight items and that the items are non-hazardous.

The standard airfreight cartons approved by the Department are about the size of a footlocker (2'x2'x3'). The only larger items we may approve for shipment as airfreight are baby necessities such as a crib or highchair. When in doubt, please ask. The cargo holds of some planes are too small to accommodate anything larger.

**SORTING/TRYING TO ANTICIPATE YOUR NEEDS:** You can expect to be in Washington anywhere from 10 weeks to 10 months. The length of time depends on your first assignment and how much training (including possible language training) is required before departure. Generally, you will not know your assignment until well into the initial orientation training course, so you will need to do some creative packing to allow for seasonal changes and a possible extended stay in Washington. When you are packing out for the first time from the location from which you were hired, try to anticipate what you might want to take with you as HHE and what you might want to store in the US while you are overseas. If you can group items somewhat according to these two categories, it will be easier to retrieve them when you are selecting goods for your first HHE shipment from Washington to post. Please note that access to storage (see below) is limited.

**STORAGE:** You are also authorized to pack and ship to storage up to 18,000 pounds of personal household effects (HHE). There is a 200-lb. minimum. These effects will go to the Department of State warehouse at Hagerstown, Maryland. However, if you are hired in Europe or Africa your effects will go to our facility, ELSO (European Logistics Support Office), in Antwerp, Belgium. ***Only when you are about to leave Washington for your first posting will you have free access to remove goods from storage. At that point, you may also request that items be placed in storage from DC. This, however is not a given. Not authorized--except at your expense--are: (1) removing goods during training; (2) adding goods during training.*** When it is time to go overseas, you will be authorized to ship up to 7,200 lbs of HHE to post. Most embassies provide completely furnished accommodations down to lamps, microwaves, or even transformers. Some western European and Mexican posts do not provide furnished housing. In those cases, employees are authorized to ship up to 18,000 lbs. of HHE. There are some notable exceptions: newly established posts or those in conflict areas often limit shipments of HHE. **When packing effects to be stored, it is important to keep a detailed inventory in order to identify by item number those pieces you might wish to ship to post at a later time.**

**MULTIPLE SHIPMENTS TO STORAGE:** You are authorized to ship household goods from the location where you are hired to storage in Hagerstown. Should you have additional belongings at another location (or locations), shipment is permitted on an "alternate origin" basis. Said another way, you may send things to storage from several different locations at USG cost. For example, the new employee might have goods to be shipped from an apartment in the town from which s/he was hired. That same employee might also have belongings in his/her parents' house at another location. The entitlement to multiple shipments to storage makes it possible to consolidate possessions which had previously been in different locations. It also facilitates logistics for people who are hired from overseas but who still have possessions stored in the US.

**DEFERRING "PACKOUT":** Should your family (known as Eligible Family Members-EFMs) not wish to join you in Washington while you are in training, you may defer packing your effects until you are ready to depart for post. At that time you may pack household effects to be shipped to post and/or into storage. However, you will not be authorized to return home at Government expense.

**Unaccompanied Air Baggage (UAB):** New employees sometimes travel to Washington without their EFMs and without using any entitlements including the employee's air freight (UAB) shipment. The UAB entitlement, which is on the "appointment orders," **only lasts for 30 days** from the time the employee arrives in Washington. After those 30 days, the employee will not be able to send UAB at Government expense from his point of hire to Washington. However, on the first Travel Authorization (TA) / Travel Orders (TO) to the first post, the employee will get another new entitlement to send UAB from Washington to the first post.

Similarly, EFMs who have deferred moving to Washington, would also have 30 days from the time of their deferred arrival in DC to ship air freight from the point where the employee was hired to DC. Like the employee, the EFMs would also have a second UAB entitlement from Washington to the new post. On the other hand, if the EFMs were to leave for post directly from the employee's point of hire, then the UAB would be sent directly from the point of hire to the new post. Basically, "the air freight follows the traveler." Shipping UAB which does not "follow the traveler" is apt to involve cost constructing (which means paying the difference between what the orders authorize and what you want to do). Cost construction can be quite expensive because of UAB minimum weight requirements.

**Household Effects (HHE) and Storage:** As for household effects, when the EFMs are ready to depart from the employee's point of hire, the HHE may be sent directly from the point of hire to the new post. HHE may also be sent from the point of hire into storage.

As mentioned above, the employee who is already in Washington has a second and new UAB entitlement to send goods from Washington to his first post. And s/he may send a shipment of HHE from Washington to the new post. OR, the employee may put items into storage in Washington. Not

all of these requests are automatic and the employee must consult with the HR Technician in HR/CDA/AD to make certain that they are authorized on the travel orders.

**IF YOU ARE HIRED FROM OVERSEAS:** You should contact the General Services Officer (GSO) at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to arrange for shipment of your airfreight and storage of HHE. HHE can be stored at your designated storage point (either Hagerstown or ELSO) while in training or you can pack and ship to storage at a later date. That said, the Department will not pay for you to return to supervise packing.

**HHE AUTHORIZATION AND PACKING FOR YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT:** For your first overseas assignment, you will be authorized to ship all or part of what is stored plus goods which were used (and sometimes also acquired) during the training period. As mentioned above, you may pull some items from storage to ship to post or take it all if you have less weight than allowed. The combined weight of both the effects you pack in Washington and those you pull from storage cannot exceed your authorized weight allowance of 7,200 lbs. for a furnished post or 18,000 lbs. for an unfurnished post.

Note that during your entire FS career you are entitled a maximum of 18,000 lbs. of shipped and/or stored weight (a statutory limit which does not increase with family size or rank.) In other words, if you ship 7,200 lbs, you may store 10,800 lbs (ship 5,000, store 13,000 ). Also be aware that whenever you return to Washington on assignment (not on TDY) you must take possession of all your effects --- those in storage and those shipped to the U.S. from post.

**Per Diem v. HHE:** The hardship of living without the bulk of your possessions for several months of training is offset by the fact that you will be on *per diem* for the duration of the training period. The presumption is that you will rent furnished temporary quarters and, therefore, not require the HHE that are in storage. There are plenty of accommodations available in the area to meet temporary needs. As mentioned above, any access to stored goods during training is at your expense. Please note that only the employee/trainee receives *per diem*. Family members do not receive *per diem*. *Please note that for the employee, the per diem drops. The first 60 days are at 100% per diem. The second 60 days are at 50% of the original amount. And finally, for the third 60 days and onward, the per diem drops to 25% of the original per diem.*

**IMPORTANCE OF INVENTORIES AND INSURANCE:** We encourage you to begin now to keep a complete inventory of your effects noting the purchase value and keeping any receipts for important or expensive purchases. Photographs or videotape of irreplaceable or expensive items can help keep track of effects and are invaluable in the case of loss or damage. You are also strongly encouraged to purchase private insurance to cover your effects. Once you move out of a house/apartment which you own, your homeowner's policy which usually insures your effects as well as the property is no longer valid. If you plan to rent your dwelling during your absence, then the renter's policy should be written to cover your effects. If you don't own a property, an insurance policy would simply cover your goods. **Be sure that any policy is in effect before the packers come.** It is true that Government employees who are required to relocate due to their work are covered partially by the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act of 1964. However, most effects are depreciated significantly and maximum payment values are pre-established in a "Table of Maximums." Thus, it would be possible to receive only a fraction of the value you may attribute to an item. Nothing appreciates with the exception of antiques, solid wood furniture, real jewelry, sterling silver, carpets valued in excess of \$500 and paintings valued in excess of \$1,000 as established by a reputable appraiser. The Transportation publication "It's Your Move" contains the addresses and telephone numbers of several insurance companies (e.g. Clements, Hirshorn or USAA) which understand Foreign Service requirements.

Any item with a commercial value of \$1000 or more that is unusually valuable for the type of item it is (carpets, paintings, a collectable plate, but not a sofa) should be declared to the Claims Office in the

Department (Claims-Room #1255; US Department of State; Washington, D.C. 20520; FAX: 202 647 2800) before you pack. Keep a copy of this document. It is known as a High Value Items Declaration. Unless such items are declared you may not be able to file a claim against the Government for damage or loss. Smaller items of value which can be pilfered easily, such as jewelry, may also be listed.

**CONTROLLED STORAGE:** Controlled storage may be permitted for items with a value of \$1,500 or more. Some items considered for controlled storage are carpets, paintings, silver, furs and antiques but not/antique furniture. Collections of similar value may be approved, So will working firearms, even if the value is less. To request authorization, submit an itemized memo to your Personnel Technician with a **certified appraisal for each item** to be stored. This appraisal can be prepared only by an appraiser who is certified by the American Society of Appraisers or comparable professional group. Please see 14 FAM 623.1 for specific requirements. A purchase receipt is no longer sufficient to establish value. If authorized, your Personnel Technician will include the authorization in the Travel Orders. You should then notify your Transportation Counselor, who will issue appropriate documents.

**TANDEM COUPLES:** Tandem Foreign Service couples --- both spouses are employed by a Foreign Affairs agency --- are each authorized shipments under their own orders. Children can be added to either parent's orders.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** For more detailed information on travel, packing, shipping and storing effects and vehicles consult the Transportation Division's publication **"It's Your Move."**

**\*\* Administration/Logistics Management/Operations/Travel&Transportation Management/Transportation Operations**

P/Initial Travel  
M.Beecroft – 202 647 4028  
Beecroftmo@state.gov  
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